

## Role and Impact of Reward and Accountability on Training Transfer

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### Abstract

Drawing upon the element of training transfer, this present study investigates whether the reward and accountability act as influencing components for transfer of training. Questionnaire technique of the quantitative research approach was used for the primary data collection from the participants with different managerial positions from the various organizations coming to attend the training programs at National Institute of Labor Administration and Training (NILAT) Karachi, Pakistan. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed in the numerous training programs at NILAT through using simple random sampling out of which, 128 were returned and 11 were further discarded. The final analysis of 117 respondents revealed a significant relationship between accountability and training transfer whereas the findings outline an insignificant relationship between reward and training transfer. The research indicates that accountability can significantly enhance the transfer of training whereas reward has proved to be insignificant in terms of training transfer, which is contrary to the previous research findings. Discussion to findings is provided along with particularized implications for management.

**Keywords:** Impact; Reward; Accountability; Training; Transfer

### Introduction

Human resource management as a business function plays an imperative role in helping business to responsively manage the work force. Core responsibilities that come under human resource department include recruitment, training, compensation and performance management [1].

As mentioned by Burke [2] and Hutchins that organizations have found it decisively important to invest in people through training to provide them skills that would make the organization successful. Rothwell et al. [3] highlights training to be the most significant HR role as it helps an organization in equipping its employees with skills and capabilities, necessary for the competitive achievement of organizational objectives. The authors further suggest that companies invest millions on training their staff as they have realized that it's one of the major factors that can help businesses to sustain and survive profitably in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Training is referred as a designed activity or set of activities to aid employees' learning of work associated skills, behaviors and attitudes [4]. In simple terms, training is a process that involves information sharing to learn the skills and attitudes necessary to perform a particular task or group of tasks. According to Martin [5] that training is a systematic process that provides opportunity to learn basic and advanced skills and competencies to effectively perform a certain course of action.

Transfer of training can be elucidated as the usage and implementation of newly learned skills and behaviors at the workplace. Notable researchers have studied to outline factors that influence the transfer of acquired knowledge. The study however, by Baldwin et al. [6] is termed to be the most comprehensive and concrete on the topic. The model has outlined three important factors that can substantially influence training transfer and they are trainee characteristics, training design and work environment.

Managers in the work settings have an important role to play in the entire transfer of training process as Clarke [7] has underlined that facilitation and support by the managers encourages training transfer. However there have been studies that propose numerous other factors

that influence training transfer such as Saks et al. [8] many employees fail to transfer newly learned skills to the workplace.

As organizations have started realizing that the organizing and conducting training programs are not enough as long as initiatives to ensure the transfer of the learned skills is taken into consideration. Therefore, there has been a serious emphasis of companies to establish systems, procedures and policies that could motivate employees to transfer training [9].

### Statement of problem

Edward [10] underscores that accountability works as a driving force for encouraging training transfer and promoting positive change in a work setting. Saks et al. [8] also outlined that accountability boost responsibility and hence increase the transfer of learning to the workplace. Yet research on the impact of accountability on training transfer is very limited [11].

According to Yamnill et al. [12] that rewards can be intrinsic as well as extrinsic and employees satisfactorily transfer learned skills at the workplace when they are adequately rewarded. According to American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) that US companies alone spend \$125 billion dollars on training and development initiatives [13]. The report also states that there are further investments made to push employees to transfer skills at the workplace. To what extent rewards effectively support and facilitate training transfer in the context of Pakistan has not been studied yet as per our knowledge. More importantly, which of these organizational factors plays a more important role in training transfer is also not clear.

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This paper therefore aims to outline as to how accountability and reward influence training transfer. The study aims to outline as to what extent accountability and rewards will impact on training transfer and to what extent the findings will be in parallel to the research studies conducted in the other geographical locations and work settings.

## Literature Review

### Transfer of learning

Blume et al. [14] have argued that the transfer of learning is an ever stretched issue in the area of psychology and education. The argument concerning to transfer of training started receiving attention around 100 years ago and the focus has remained on nature, context and prevalence [15]. The issue of learning transfer is critical as it outlines the failure of individuals towards improving their behavior and performance on the job which means that training is unlikely to affect the organizational performance [16].

Saks et al. [8] have also discussed similar problem in a survey that sampled training professionals from 150 organizations. The results of the survey indicated that nearly 34% of the employees failed to transfer the training immediately to the workplace. However, 62% become successful in transferring learning immediately on the job and 44% manage to do so after six months.

In response to this problem, numerous researchers have studied and explored strategies that could facilitate training transfer. However, most of the research studies have focused on individual and situational factors that influence training transfer following a particular training program [14]. Majority of the research projects conducted on transfer of training revolves around individual level of analysis through focusing on any particular training program. However, transfer of training is related and thus can also be examined from organizational perspective to explore what and how organizations can facilitate responsive transfer of training. As Baldwin et al. [6] has underlined that difference in the organizational climate (for instance support) varies the extent of transfer of training material on the job which is why, Ford et al. [17] have highlighted and recommended the need for transfer research to pin point organizational perspective and its potential influence on training transfer and accountability and reward are one of the key organizational components.

This research is therefore focusing on the organizational characteristics such as accountability and rewards to explore their impact on training transfer.

This is the reason why the transfer training theorists have started coining the term 'transfer system'. According to Holton [18] factors influencing transfer system includes person, training program and the organization. Rouiller et al. [19] explored the relationship between organizational transfer climate and transfer of training through the measure with situations and scenarios that could support or facilitate in the process of transfer of training at the workplace. With a sample of Assistant Managers from a growing fast food organization, they found that organizational transfer climate plays a significant role in the promoting transfer behavior across 102 units. It's one of the few empirical studies conducted to explore the disparity of positive organizational transfer climate for training transfer from a training program to a workplace.

Evaluation of the transfer features and issues critically require sound understanding of what is meant by transfer through establishing command over the factors that affect training transfer [6]. The model

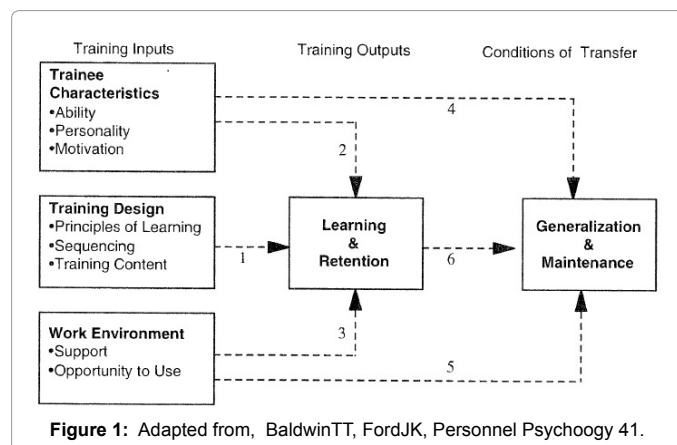
presented by them outlines three major factors (Figure 1).

Mental ability is considered to be one of the significant factors with regards to learner's characteristics. As Burke [2] has underlined that previous researches provide evidence suggesting that trainees/learners with higher mental ability are capable of transferring the acquired knowledge more responsively compared to others.

Mathieu et al. [20] have established motivation as the key element in pre, during and post training activities as it keeps the learner persistent and boosts passion for practically performing those activities. These results are in parallel with the findings of Noe [21] that highlights that motivation for learning always facilitates trainees to apply knowledge in the practical world setting. Motivation however can be intrinsic and extrinsic. As Rouiller et al. [19] found that both components are critical for transfer of acquired knowledge to the workplace. Training is training content design and its deliver which includes TNA-Training need assessment, training content design, methods applied for delivery also influences the transfer [2]. Key motivation to attend any training program develops when a training program is designed to fill gap between the actual skills and job required or desired skills [22].

According to Taylor [23] that behavior modeling facilitated training transfer when combined with rewards and sanctions by the organization. Work environment also makes critical contribution in training transfer. Salas et al. [9] have also underlined that realistic practice situations and schemes help trainees to actively transfer learning and new skills.

Work environment has an important role to play in the training transfer. Rouiller et al. [19] suggest that transfer climate consists of elements in work settings that hold back or encourage the use of new skills. the authors also suggest that work settings consists of situational cues which means peer support, manager goals and targets, equipment availability, opportunity to practice etc and consequences comprises of punishment, feedback (+ ve and - ve) on the applied new skills and knowledge [9,12]. According to Clarke [7] that supervisors and peers individually play a healthy role in contributing towards training transfer. Hawley et al. [24], found that networking with peers and exchange of ideas concerning the training content helped trainees in boosting transfer within 6 months after training. Holton et al. [25] investigated upon supervisor support, peer support, training validity and found that organizational transfer climate plays a critical role in this regard. Clarke [7] also mentions that for successful training transfer, trainees require appropriate tools, equipment and opportunity to apply learned skills at the workplace.



Since the focus of this study is on the impact of accountability and reward on training transfer, the discussion and review of the other influencing components has been kept limited.

### Accountability and training transfer

Accountability in the research studies related to training define it as the degree to which the organization, environment and its top management assumes the trainee to learn and use the learned knowledge and skills on to the job with responsibility for doing so [26].

Edward [10] found that senior management in an organization can achieve transfer of training also through increasing employee accountability. The research also found that employee accountability is the driving tool for enhancing training transfer and performance change at the workplace. Research by Saks et al. [8] in which they study found that accountability mechanisms for training proved as a significant predictor of training transfer. Also the research by Tannenbaum [20] as cited by Saks et al. [8] mentioned that making trainees to prepare a post training report or taking them for an assessment makes them fee accountable for their learning which apparently pushes them to transfer.

However, studies on the impact of accountability on training transfer are very scarce [11]. The authors argue that major models on the training transfer have notably missed to focus on accountability. Transfer models by Baldwin et al. [6] or even the ulti level integrated training transfer model by Machin [27] which mentions numerous individual and organizational level variables but does not include accountability. Therefore, the role and impact of accountability on training transfer remains a bit ignored.

Dr. Coates, CEO of Performance Support Systems writes in his review on Enhance the Transfer of Training that researches have outlined that a very low number of training participants actually change their behavior after receiving training, resulting in 70-90% of investment wastage. The review further mentions that transfer of training is a serious concern of businesses these days therefore he suggests businesses to insist upon training transfer through accountability. The employees should be made accountable for the change in their behavior and work once trained and future training decisions should also be based on the ROI- return on the previous training investments through improved performance they provide [28].

Hutchins [29] conducted a research study of the training transfer practices where training professionals of an ASTD center (name not mentioned) were sampled; distributed 413 surveys questionnaires and received 172 back. The research specifically contained items related to accountability to explore its potential effect on training transfer. The research outlined that majority of training professionals outlined that the training practices that were followed by accountability measures at the work place enhanced training transfer. The research also concluded that post training results are best achieved when the top management highlights the training transfer concerns and holds the middle and operational level management accountable to ensure the trainees apply newly learned knowledge and skills at the workplace. The research also underlines a significant impact of performance appraisal followed by rewards and recognition as a motivating organizational factor for the transfer of training.

So the relive of the literature outline that accountability is one of the important organizational variables that can potentially play a predictive role towards training transfer but has not been empirically researched to a greater extent.

### Reward and training transfer

Armstrong [30] suggests that, reward is recognition of the contribution of people towards an organization by financial and non-financial means. In the business perspective it can also be viewed as a valuable entity given to an employee in the return of his/her service, efforts and organizational achievements. Yamnill et al. [12] mention that rewards are intrinsic as well we extrinsic and employees satisfactorily transfer learned skills at the workplace when they are adequately rewarded.

Holton et al. [18] conducted a research to explore the effect and significance of 16 different factors that possess potential to influence the training transfer at the workplace through sampling 328 respondents from 6 companies and received 106 questionnaires back and the research found rewards to be a significant predictor of training transfer. The research also found that when employees are rewarded (financially or non-financially) for their enhanced performance after training, the workers feel that the organization recognizes their efforts and values their performance. Noe et al. [21] in their article explained that if an individual expects that he/she will gain equity in pay or through other rewards by attending a particular training then there are greater chances of the occurrence of learning and transfer on the job. Employee training transfer can be supported by organizations and supervisors through recognition, encouragement and rewards [31].

Ryan [32] of Madison performance group suggests that the recent corporate trends in the business sectors have strongly suggested that training alone is not enough. Businesses have learned that an integrated formula of relevant objectives, rewards and incentives offerings motivate employees to use new skills learned. So aligning desired behaviors with the incentives is critical for training transfer. The review also outlines that managers can conveniently communicate goals and aligns performance through using a reward system. However, Xiao [33] conducted a research on training of female workers in four electronic manufacturing companies where the research found that verbal recognition and praise in addition to tangible reward also motivate training transfer. The research also explored that management ideology and practices are also critical for the maximization of training outcomes.

Summary of these entire studies highlight a certain relationship between accountability, rewards and training transfer. However, this present paper analyzes as to what extent the previous study results are consistent with regards to the targeted sample of this study.

### Methodology, Population and Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling technique was used to select individuals with an equal opportunity to participate in the research. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed during various trainings programs (from January to April, 2014) at NILAT out of which 128 responded. A total of 11 questionnaires turned out to be inappropriately filled; making a total of 117 questionnaires worthwhile for further analysis.

NILAT is a public sector training body that offers training programs concerning to human resource, labor laws, health and various soft skill areas. The participants belong to different managerial positions from public and private sector organizations that were selected as respondents for this study.

Survey technique of the quantitative research approach was used in the primary data collection. Questionnaires were distributed amongst the participants coming from various organizations to attend training

programs at the National Institute of Labor Administration and Training (NILAT), Karachi Pakistan.

### Measurement (Rephrase accountability first and reward)

Training transfer was measured through items from Holton [34]. Impact of accountability on training transfer was measured through items adopted from an investigation of training activities and transfer of training in organizations by Saks et al. [8]. The impact of rewards on training transfer was measured through items adopted from learning and transfer system inventory by Holton et al. [25,34].

The items were measured by 5 Likert scales with 1 referring to strongly disagree to 5 denoting as strongly agree. Basic demographic information was also collected from the participants that included gender, age, total years of work experience and length of service in the current organization.

### Findings

Out of 117 respondents, 100 (85.5%) were male and 17 (14.5%) were female. In terms of the age range of the participants, 7 (6%) of the respondents were from 18-25; 68 (58.1%) from 26-35; 21 (17.9%) from 36-45; 17 (14.5%) belonged to 46-55 and 4 (3.4%) associated them with the age range of 56 and above.

In connection to the total years of work experience 16 (13.7%) responded to have 0 to 5 years of work experience; 46 (39.3%) had experience of 6-10 years; 17 (14.5%) turned out to be having a total experience between 11-15 years; 13 (11.1%) participants were with years of experience between 16-20 and 25 (21.4%) responded to have experience of 21 years and above.

The profile with regards to the length of service in the current organization indicated that 27 (23.1%) of the participants have served between 0-5 years; 49 (41.9%) between 6-10 years; 10 (8.5%) between 11-15 years; 9 (7.7%) between 16-20 and 22 (18.8%) have served for 21 years and above.

From the descriptive analysis, results indicated that accountability has a higher mean (2.799), than the reward (2.576). The mean for training transfer is 3.410. Based on these it seems that the respondents agree to most of the statements on each of these three variables respectively (Table 1).

### Correlation

According to Malhotra that the correlation is the most commonly used tool for measuring the strength between the two variables. To assess the relationship, the Pearson value must fall within the range from -1 to +1. The research has underlined that accountability is positively correlated and statistically significant with training transfer ( $p=0.186$ ,  $sig=0.045$ ) whereas reward is correlated but not statistically significant. ( $p=0.048$ ,  $sig=0.609$ ) (Tables 2 and 3).

Results show that value of  $sig=0.034$  which is less than 0.05 and  $t$  value is 2.15 therefore the relationship between accountability and transfer of training is significant. This indicates that the accountability is a useful factor for transfer of training in this context.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training Transfer	117	3.410	.660
Accountability	117	2.799	1.123
Reward	117	2.576	.994

Table 1: Descriptive statistics.

	Training transfer
<b>Training transfer-</b> Pearson correlation	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	
N	117
<b>Accountability-</b> Pearson correlation	.186*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.045
N	117
<b>Reward-</b> Pearson correlation	.048
Sig. (2-tailed)	.609
N	117

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 2: Correlations.

	t	Sig
(constant)	17.471	.000
Accountability	2.15	0.034
Reward	-.892	.374

Dependent variable: Training transfer.

Table 3: Coefficients.

Results show that value of  $sig=0.374$  which is greater than 0.05 and  $t$  value is  $-.892$  therefore there is no significant relationship between reward and transfer of training. This suggests that reward is an ineffective factor compared to accountability.

### Discussion and Implications

This study specifically aimed to investigate and identify the strength of relationship between the independent variables i.e., accountability and reward and dependent variable, i.e., training transfer. The overall objective was to explore how much both the factors help in enhancing the training transfer at the workplace. Since training transfer is an issue in organizations as discussed earlier in the studies conducted previously; this study strives to fill the information gap for businesses as to how potential enterprises can responsively encourage training transfer through rewards and accountability.

The research has found a significant relationship between accountability and training transfer and the results are in parallel with the research findings of [10,28,29].

On the flipside, the results clearly outline that there is an insignificant relationship between reward and training transfer which is in contrast with the findings of [12,18,30-32,34].

Moreover, the research also highlights a considerable point from the statistical analysis that there is a significant difference in terms of the statistical correlation of accountability with training transfer against versus the statistical correlation of rewards with the training transfer.

The study results delineate critically useful implications concerning to the role of organizational components on training transfer.

The research findings suggest that accountability can play a critically healthy role in facilitating and increasing training transfer. The findings suggest that organizations aiming to attain much out from their training investments need to develop a systematic accountability procedure that could make people to be responsible for applying the newly learned skills and knowledge at the workplace. Top Management can play an imperatively significant role in training transfer by implementing companywide policies and procedures to ensure training transfer happens. This can be done through involving people into discussion forums once they return back from the training program(s) or putting them to submit progress report, mentioning how and to what extent they have successfully managed to apply the



newly learned skills and information. Supervisory roles can also play a critical part in this regard through motivating people to transfer and ensure what people have learned during the training program(s) is effectively in exercise at the workplace.

The findings also forward implication for the top management to regard employees from varied levels differently. Since the sample of the research consisted of management professionals and office rank employees, the research concludes accountability to be more important to them for training transfer compared to reward. This shows that responsibility motivates and stimulates officer ranked individuals more for training transfer. It can also be seen that the making people responsible for the transfer of newly learned skills to the workplace is more effective than motivating them to do so through rewards. As Hafiza [35] suggest that reward may or may not contribute towards employee motivation.

Moreover, organizational politics and unfair reward system also make it ineffective as Nohria [36] in the Harvard Business Review suggest that Rewards do not work effectively when they are dominated by politics and status matters; which may be the case of some of the participants [37-39]. So the management needs to ensure that its reward system is based on fair and objective grounds.

## Conclusion

The study empirically tested to examine the relationship of accountability and reward with training transfer. The results found that training transfer can be positively enhanced through accountability. Through making people accountable of applying the newly learned skills to the workplace, transfer of training can be responsively enhanced.

The study also found that that employee rewards can also play their part in encouraging training transfer but not greater as compared to accountability. However, previous research studies have found notable impact of rewards on training transfer. Further research in this area is therefore encouraged as companies allocate billions of dollars for rewarding employees to develop and transfer so that the organizational objectives are competitively achieved. It closing, it is expected that the current research findings will encourage numerous researchers to focus on the impact of accountability on training transfer and would also motivate to further explore and verify the contrary results between reward and training transfer for concrete understanding.

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